Place: Arden Community Club
Hall Rd
Arden, WA

Time: 7:00 PM
Third Tuesday
Each Month
(Jan.-Dec.)

The Panorama Prospector

September 2011

Panorama Gem and Mineral Club

Minutes

August 16, 2011

Our Annual Picnic was enjoyed with delight. We had 65 members present. Bill Allen did a great job of cooking the hamburgers and hot dogs. The potluck dishes were all very delicious! Thank you everyone for making this event so memorable. Johnie called for a short meeting. Sylvia gave the treasurer's report. Vanita, Jan, Mary Hill, and Luci will provide the refreshments for next meeting. It was fun that we were able to sing Happy Birthday to Johnie – his 70th!

We received a scholarship thanks from Nathan Gerber - He has graduated from the university in Denver with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was accepted by Oregon State University for graduate work.

Steve Fox brought up our potential booths at the local Fairs – Colville, Clayton, and Marcus Cider Fest. The big issue is insurance. We will investigate what the insurance will cost for next year. Clayton Fair was mentioned and we will consider that Fair for next year. We are planning a booth at the Marcus Cider Fest this year in October.

Sherry Bamberger's Internet sales have dried up, probably due to the time period with economics so critical.

Daniel Lundy announced his upcoming marriage to Tina Robertson scheduled for "next month". Congratulations!

Door Prizes were divided into two groups. Two for the young members and two for adults. The following members won awards: Allison Marken and Damien Claessen - Rusty LaViolette and Eve duBois.

A question was asked if members would like a door prize at each meeting. The general consensus was "yes".

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A Trip to Topaz

By Bruce Hurley

Several decades ago, a trip to the Topaz Mountain rockhounding area in the Thomas Range northwest of Delta, Utah, was often the highlight of a mineral collector's year. Topaz Mountain, true to its name, hosts transparent, champagne-colored topaz [$Al_2SiO_4(F,OH)_2$] specimens deposited in small cavities in a Miocene-age rhyolite lava dome. These open spaces were once filled with superheated volcanic gases, from which the topaz, was deposited, as the gases slowly cooled. Other minerals also present within these cavities include thumbnail and micro-sized crystals of drusy quartz [SiO_2], specular hematite [Fe_2O_3], bixbyite [$(Mn,Fe)_2O_3$], pseudobrookite [Fe_2TiO_5] and red beryl ($Be_3Al_2Si_6O_{18}$). With a good hand sledge, a couple of sharp chisels and a gadbar, a few hours' of hard work would usually reward each collector with at least two or three classy topaz crystals a half-inch (12 millimeters) or more in length, often on matrix, and several specimens of the other minerals. These specimens were reasonably easy to collect from outcrop exposures and loose boulders. The Topaz Valley at the south end of the mountain was the favorite collecting area, and also a nice place to camp. Back then, the road in the wash going into the valley used to sparkle with tiny shards of topaz in the soil.

This August (2011), a friend and I made our first visit to Topaz Mountain in a decade, and as Marvin Gaye once sang, "Things ain't what they used to be." Years back, early on a day in midsummer, there were enough rockhounds in the valley that parking places near the prized, rocky hill known as The Knob were hard to find. But this August there were more pronghorns than people in the Topaz Valley; we were the only visitors besides several ATV riders. Once we reached The Knob the reason hit us. There was nowhere left to put a chisel into what is now left of the rocky outcrop! Even the backside of what was once The Knob is now skinned off to smooth, hammered rock.

The outcrop walls of the valley, especially the west wall, have also been skinned nearly smooth. The only accessible rocks to break without extensive work with heavy sledges, chisels and large prybars were boulders in the washes. After several hours of boulder-busting, we together found several good and half a dozen fair

thumbnail specimens of topaz, and several other fair small matrix pieces. We did not find any of the less-common minerals, but counted ourselves lucky to have found anything at all. Most of the sparkle is even gone from the road – someone has apparently even screened the wash for all but the tiniest shards of topaz. There is still plenty of topaz deep in the rhyolite of the Thomas Range, but do not expect to find it easily. Plan to work hard and stay late, and take plenty of water. It just might be worth the effort!

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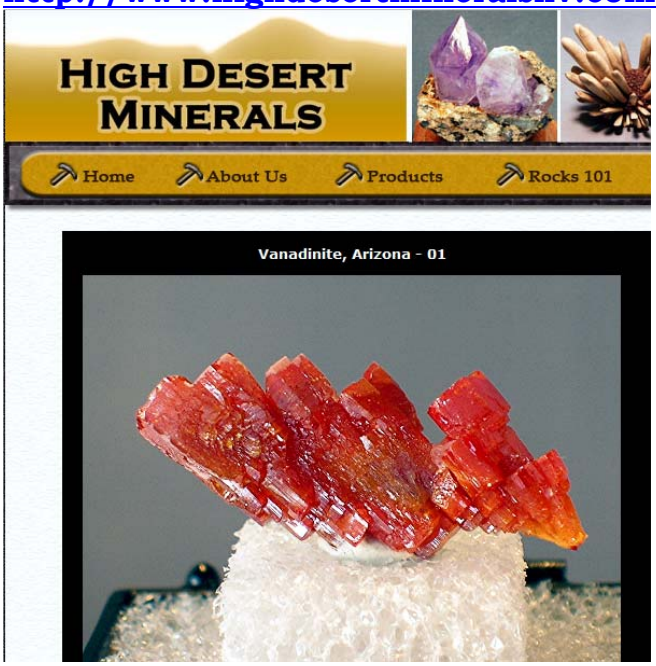
Next question – Who will provide the door prize for the meetings.

Be prepared to suggest how we can accomplish this. It was suggested that the winner of each prize would provide the prize for the next meeting. What do you think?

end

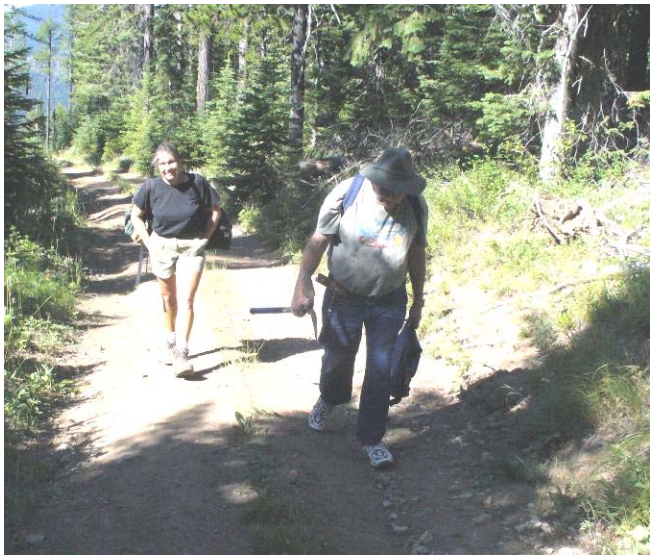
http://www.highdesertmineralsnv.com/



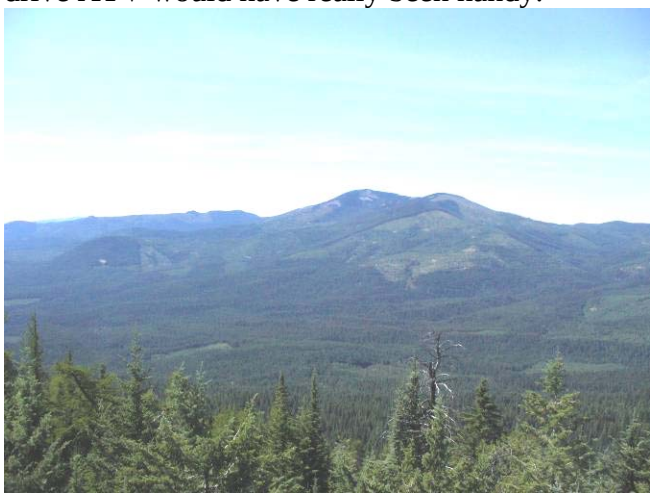
Thanks to Bruce Hurley for his lead article. Please check out his new website High Desert Minerals.

Timber Mt Revisted

By Joseph Barreca



Here's a second pair of rockhounds that I cajoled into searching for the elusive Timber Mt Mine. As you may recall from the July newsletter, Jerry Novak and I spent a long day reaching the wrong coordinates for that mine. I thought this would be an easy trip for Fran Davis and Bruce Hurley since a road goes right up to the top of Timber Mt. The Forest Service threw a couple of monkey wrenches into that. In an evident effort to save their lookout tower from vandalism, they blocked off the road about a mile and a half from the tower, so we had to walk in. Not that is was the greatest road anyway. Sure, it looks fine right here but the rocks and ruts on the way up to the gate were enough to persuade any reasonable driver to turn back. On the other hand, there was no reasonable place to turn around and start back until we reached the gate. A four-wheel drive ATV would have really been handy.



The views on the other hand were pretty darn nice from the top of the lookout tower. This one looks south toward Calispell Peak. It is famous for the Merikay Mine a known source of Beryl crystals. The whole area has pockets of pegmatite, the very rock type we were interested in on this hike. As magma cools into granite it forms crystals from the minerals within it. The slower the cooling process, the larger the crystals. We were hoping to find Epidote, Garnets and Zoisite.

At the foot of the Lookout Tower, we found a swath of pegmatic rocks going north. As a geographer, I wanted to find the exact location of the coordinates I had for the mine. After some fooling around with the settings on my GPS and a lot of tramping around, we were in a stand of fallen trees with no evidence of digging. Bruce suggested that we re-examine the open area with the Pegamatite. That seemed like our best shot, so we picked around for quite awhile. It looks like what happened here is that rockhounds moved a lot of rock looking for gems and the Forest Service moved them all back considering it a hazard. Forest Service monkey wrench number 2.

Here I am sitting on Pegmatite and examining my maps trying to determine a worth-while next move. Turns out, Fran Davis came up with the winning suggestion. She said she could probably locate the Beryl Dig on Tower Road that she had been to with some other club members the month before. So we headed south to the east end of Flowery Trail and cut off on Winchester Creek

Road which winds through the mountains on the other side of Calispell Peak from the previous picture.

Fran was spot on. We arrived at the Beryl Dig and got to looking around. After cracking his share of loose rocks, Bruce decided that the direct approach was best and started digging. I wandered off and discovered that we were in the middle of that biggest patch of huckleberries I had ever seen. It was a giant south-facing clearcut.

Fran took right off after the huckleberries and we didn't see much of her for quite awhile. I went back to looking over loose rock and found a pretty nice Beryl Crystal in the ditch beside the road. Here is a look at it just to show some Beryl.

The greenish part in the center with the sharp edges is the Beryl. It is hard to see the hexagonal shape from this angle. I may try to dig it out of there. Notice the large blocks of white Feldspar on the right side and the dark smokey Quartz in the middle. Under UV light, there are bright yellow streaks in the white parts of this rock. I suspect that they may be autunite, a uranium ore, since smokey quartz is associated with exposure to radiation. At any rate, it is a good example of the wonders of Pegmatite.

Something else common at this site in large quantities is mica, big clear books of it that sparkle in the sunlight. Large flakes of Mica are a common indicator of Pegmatite, but the real prize is the Beryl, which is much harder to come by.

Here is Bruce, digging himself deeper. He found a very likely rock in the middle of this hole but it kept going further and further down. It's still there. In the shadows above him, the bank has been deeply undercut. This looks like a dangerous situation. I'm glad Bruce didn't start there and that the last people on the scene left off digging. The overburden needs to be brought down and dumped over the other side of the road so that it doesn't cause problems. Better yet, we need a site that is off the road entirely. Another project for the rockhound scouts.

Upcoming Rock Shows

Sept 24-25	Hellgate Mineral	Missoula Mt	Bob Riggs 406-543-366714
Oct. 8-9	Marysville Rock & Gem	Totem Middle School	jj@comcast.net, Bill Moser 425 238-8222
Oct. 8-9	Billings Gem & Mineral	Billings Hotel & Convention	Lynn Edwards 406 855-3675
Oct. 15-16	Hells Canyon Gem Club	Nez Perce County Fairgrounds	Rick Westerholm 208-746-2101